

In the Claims

1. (Currently amended) A process for preparing instant rice comprising:
a milling step for milling brown rice to remove a controlled proportion of bran layer;
a primary immersing step for causing rice grains obtained in the said milling step to absorb water;

a primary alpha-type conversion step for converting ~~at least~~ surface layers of the rice grains obtained in the said immersing step to the alpha-structure type, wherein the converting of the surface layers comprises about 60% to 90% of the rice grains being converted to the alpha-structure type;

a preliminary drying step for drying the rice grains obtained in the said primary alpha-type conversion step up to a moisture content higher than a moisture content after final drying;

a final polishing step for consummatively polishing the rice grains obtained in the said preliminary drying step;

a secondary immersing step for causing the rice grains obtained in the said final polishing step to absorb water once again;

a secondary alpha-type conversion step for completely converting the rice grains obtained in the said secondary immersing step to the alpha-type;

a separation-into-single-grains step for separating the rice grains obtained in the said secondary alpha-type conversion step into single grains; and

a final drying step for consummatively drying the rice grains obtained in the said separation-into-single-grains step.

2. (Original) A process for preparing instant rice according to claim 1, further

comprising a water-removing step between said primary immersing step and said primary alpha-type conversion step.

3. (Original) A process for preparing instant rice according to claim 1, further comprising a water-removing step between said secondary immersing step and said secondary alpha-type conversion step.

4. (Original) A process for preparing instant rice according to claim 1, further comprising a first water-removing step between said primary immersing step and said primary alpha-type conversion step and a second water-removing step between said secondary immersing step and said secondary alpha-type conversion step.

5. (Original) Instant rice characterized by being prepared according to the process defined in claim 1.

6. (Previously presented) A process for preparing instant rice according to claim 1, wherein the milling step comprises milling using a vertical-type polishing machine.

7. (Currently amended) A process for preparing instant rice according to claim 1, wherein the primary immersing step comprises using an apparatus that is substantially different structurally from an apparatus utilized in the secondary immersing step.

8. (Previously presented) A process for preparing instant rice according to claim 1, further comprising performing a water-removing step after the primary immersing step.

9. (Previously presented) A process for preparing instant rice according to claim 1, further comprising performing a water-removing step after the secondary immersing step.

10. (Previously presented) A process for preparing instant rice according to claim 1, further comprising:

performing a first water-removing step after the primary immersing step; and
performing a second water-removing step after the secondary immersing step.

11. (Previously presented) A process for preparing instant rice according to claim 1, wherein the separation-into-single-grains step comprises ejecting air toward rice grains.

12. (Previously presented) A process for preparing instant rice according to claim 1, wherein the separation-into-single-grains step comprises:

providing rice grains in a screen; and
ejecting air toward the screen and rice grains.

13. (Previously presented) A process for preparing instant rice according to claim 1, wherein the separation-into-single-grains step comprises:

providing rice grains in a screen;

ejecting air toward the screen and rice grains; and
vibrating the screen to transport the rice grains to an exit port.

14. (Previously presented) A process for preparing instant rice according to claim 1, wherein the separation-into-single-grains step comprises:

ejecting water toward rice grains;
providing the rice grains in a screen; and
ejecting air toward the screen.

15. (New) A process for preparing instant rice accordingly to claim 1 wherein the secondary alpha-type conversion step comprises converting core portions of the rice grains to the alpha-structure type, and wherein the secondary immersing step comprises providing the moisture content of the rice grains to a range of about 55% to 60%.

16. (New) A process for preparing instant rice accordingly to claim 1 wherein the milling step comprises milling 30% to 70% of the brown rice.